

Exodus 15:1-13, 17-18
The Festival of the Resurrection of Our Lord
He Lives!
All Glory to His Name

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Winchester, VA
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Grace and peace to you from our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

He was tending to his father-in-law's sheep just like any other day when he noticed it, a bush that was on fire and yet not burning up, he moved in closer to inspect it and then he heard the voice. **"Moses! Moses!"** And Moses said, **"Here I am."** **"Do not come any closer,"** God said. **"Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."** Then He said, **"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob** (Ex 3:4-6). And then God revealed His plan. He had heard the cries of His people the children of Israel who had been subjected to slavery in Egypt. He was sending Moses to Pharaoh to deliver the message, **Let my people go** (Ex 9:1).

But Pharaoh didn't listen, did he? You're familiar with the story. The wonders God performed in Egypt demonstrating His awesome power. Ten devastating plagues culminating with the tenth and final—the plague on the firstborn. That plague wouldn't affect the Israelites as long as they followed the detailed prescriptions the Lord gave to them through Moses. They were to take a lamb into their homes and there it would live among them for two weeks before they were to slaughter it, take some of its blood, and paint it on the sides and tops of their doorframes. When the LORD came and saw the blood of the lamb on their doorframes He would pass over their homes and spare them. But amongst the Egyptians there was not a single home without someone dead.

That very night Pharaoh called Moses to him and commanded him to take his people and leave. So they left and the Lord led them with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to banks of the Red Sea. As Pharaoh considered that he had just lost a workforce of well over a million people, he changed his mind, called up his army, the most powerful army at that time in the entire world, and set out after the Israelites. They were trapped. With the waters of the Red Sea at their backs and Pharaoh's army bearing down on them, terror and fear began to grip them. **Do not be afraid,** Moses called out to them, **stand firm, and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today.... The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still** (Ex 14:13-14). And then God acted. He moved between His people and the Egyptians and instructed Moses to lift up his staff and stretch out his hand over the sea. Then God drove the waters of the sea back with a powerful wind, the Israelites crossed through on dry ground with a wall of water on either side but when Pharaoh's cavalry and chariots pursued them God had Moses stretch out his hand again. The water flowed back, and Pharaoh's entire army was lost.

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: "I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea. ²"The LORD is my strength and my defense; He has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and I will exalt Him. ³The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is His name. ⁴Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea. The best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea. ⁵The deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone.

God had rescued His people. They had been enslaved and He had delivered them. They were trapped, staring their death in the face, and He provided a way out for them. He destroyed their enemies and now, just as He had promised their forefathers, He was leading them to the Promised Land of Canaan.

⁶Your right hand, LORD, was majestic in power. Your right hand, LORD, shattered the enemy. ⁷"In the greatness of Your majesty You threw down those who opposed You. You unleashed Your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble. ⁸By the blast of Your nostrils the waters piled up. The surging waters stood up like a wall; the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea. ⁹The enemy boasted, 'I will pursue, I will overtake them. I will divide the spoils; I will gorge myself on them. I will

draw my sword and my hand will destroy them.’¹⁰ But You blew with Your breath, and the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters.

There was a reason that God had promised Abraham that He would give the land of Canaan to his descendants. It was there, in that land, from that people, that God would bring to completion His plan for the salvation of the world. There, He would send the Messiah to save His people from their sins. Pharaoh and his army had pitted themselves not against a fleeing band of slaves, but against the Almighty LORD and His eternal plan. They stood against Him and He destroyed them.

¹¹ Who among the gods is like You, LORD? Who is like You—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? Moses and the Israelites recognized how amazing their God was. They had seen the awesome works of His hands, His power and might. They had been delivered from slavery and death and so they lifted up their voices in song and in praise.

The Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, it’s an exceptional account. It was even used as the basis for the plot of what still today is the seventh most successful film of all time. But I know what some of you are thinking right now. What about the part with the ladies, and the empty tomb with the stone rolled away, and then the angels saying, **He is not here; He is risen!** (Lk 24:6). Isn’t that the account we’re supposed to be talking about this morning? It is, and we’re getting there, but first I want to fast forward even farther into the future almost 3500 years after Moses and the Exodus because we’re not really here this morning to talk about the Israelites exiting Egypt and crossing through the Red Sea, and we’re not really here to talk about Mary Magdalene or Peter.

The real story we’re here to discuss this morning is yours. The reason we started out looking at the Exodus is because your story is remarkably similar to that of the Israelites whom God brought out of Egypt. Like those Israelites, God had already chosen you before you were ever even born to be His people. His desire was to be your God and to dwell with you forever in His kingdom. But you were not born in God’s kingdom. Like those Israelites, you were born into slavery. Not a forced labor kind of slavery, no, much worse, you and I were born into the slavery of sin.

We were held captive in sin by the devil, the age-old enemy of man. His one desire is to back us into a corner—our sin, our trespasses against the holy will of God, serving as a wall separating us from Him and cutting us off and death and hell, complete and utter separation from God, marching closer day by day.

Unlike the Israelites, our predicament was so bad—our spiritual slavery cursing us also with spiritual blindness—that we didn’t even know to cry out to God for salvation. But He took action anyway. He sent His prophets to us just as He sent Moses to the Israelites. That prophet of the Lord for you may have been a parent or a friend, a pastor or a teacher. They opened our eyes to just how perilous our situation was, holding up the mirror of God’s law to show us the true wretchedness and ugliness of our sin, alerting us to the terror that the wages of sin is death. But they had another message for us as well: **Do not be afraid, stand firm, and you will see the deliverance the LORD brings to you. The LORD fights for you; you need only to be still.**

And then they told us the greatest story of all, the story of Jesus, the Lamb of God. The true Passover Lamb who came into our world and made His dwelling among us. God the Son, in the greatest miracle of all time, clothed Himself in human flesh. He lived a human life in perfect obedience to God’s law and then was slaughtered for you and for me so that, having been marked with His blood, death would pass us over. With His death, Jesus paid the penalty for your sins, the ransom price to release you from your slavery to sin, to unshackle you from the chains and fetters of death and lead you into everlasting life.

But there’s a problem with this salvation story, isn’t there? Our champion, Jesus the Lamb of God, was slain. They took His body down from the cross and laid it in a tomb. So is that where the story ends? Because if so, it would seem that it was not death who was defeated but our Rescuer and Savior.

Don’t be afraid. Stand firm, and see the salvation the LORD has won for you. He has fought for you and triumphed! You need only to be still. The story of our salvation did not end with our Savior dead and lying in the grave. When the women went that Sunday morning, they found His tomb empty and the stone that had sealed it rolled away from the entrance. Before they could even begin to puzzle out what might have

happened, angels gleaming in heavenly glory appeared to them and said, **Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; He has risen!** (Lk 24:5-6).

Death had been defeated. And not only for Jesus, but for you and me as well. Satan had us cornered, backed up against our sins with death marching steadily closer, and then God acted. He provided His Lamb to die in our place. He led us through the waters of Holy Baptism and washed our sins away. And so, like the Israelites, we gather together here on Easter Sunday morning to lift up our voices in song and praise with shouts of, “Alleluia! He lives! All glory to His name,” because the Lamb who was slain has risen to life and we are delivered from sin, death, and hell.

But that isn’t the end of the story either. For us or for the Israelites. Exodus doesn’t end with the account of the crossing of the Red Sea, with Pharaoh and his army sinking like lead in the mighty waters. As Moses and the Israelites sang to the LORD, they also looked forward to what lay ahead.

¹² **“You stretch out Your right hand, and the earth swallows Your enemies. ¹³ In Your unfailing love You will lead the people You have redeemed. In Your strength You will guide them to Your holy dwelling. ¹⁷ You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of Your inheritance—the place, LORD, You made for Your dwelling, the sanctuary, Lord, Your hands established. ¹⁸ “The LORD reigns for ever and ever.”**

Your story did not end with that first time someone came to you and shared with you the Word of God. It didn’t end on the day God brought you into His family and gave you new life through the waters of Baptism. The story of God’s salvation for sinners does not end with the account of Christ’s death and resurrection. On Thursday evening, the night before His crucifixion, Jesus went to Garden of Gethsemane with His disciples. While they were there, He told them, **In a little while you will see Me no more, and then after a little while you will see Me. In My Father’s house there are many rooms; I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am** (Jn 16:16; 14:2-3).

Your story and the story of your salvation doesn’t have an end. Our Lord Jesus has promised to return to take us to be with Him in heaven and then that’s just the beginning. In his children’s series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, C. S. Lewis tells us the story of the Pevensie children. At the end of the final book in the series, *The Last Battle*, the Pevensies come back to Narnia for good after dying in a train accident. This new, true Narnia is Lewis’s portrayal of Heaven and the New Jerusalem. Arriving there, they’re greeted by their old friend Aslan the Lion, the Christ figure of Lewis’s story.

Here’s what Lewis writes: *As He spoke [to them], He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.*

You and I are still in the cover and title pages of our stories. But the hope of Easter is that the day is coming and coming soon when we will enter into “Chapter One of that Great Story which no one on earth has read.” No one has read it, but God did reveal a glimpse of it to St. John which He records for us in the last book of the Bible. In Revelation 15 he tells us about a day in heaven when the song of Moses and the Israelites will be mingled together our Easter songs about the Lamb who was slain and is risen.

I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of God’s servant Moses and of the Lamb: “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the nations. Who will not fear You, Lord, and bring glory to Your name? For You alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before You, for Your righteous acts have been revealed” (Rev 15:2-4).

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen!